

Bridgend County Borough Council Education and Family Support Directorate

Coronavirus and schools frequently asked questions (FAQ) document

Thursday 12 March 2020

Q1. We have a member of staff who has just returned from Italy. What do we do?

A1. The current advice from the Public Health Wales and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is for anyone returning from a Category 1 area to self-isolate for 14 days even if they have no symptoms. If staff or pupils are returning from a Category 2 area, self-isolation is only advised if there are symptoms of coronavirus. Further information is available from the following links:

[Public Health Wales](#)

[Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

Q2. Some children have recently returned from a country where a worker at the resort pupils and staff were staying at has been diagnosed with coronavirus. What extra precautions should we take and should the pupils be asked to self-isolate?

A2. Public Health Wales has advised that there is no need for any special precautions in relation to this matter unless the country specified was a Category 1 or Category 2 area. In this scenario, refer to FCO advice summarised in the answer to Q1 above. Schools should otherwise continue to follow the current general advice in relation to regular handwashing and monitoring of symptoms.

Q3. A family member is travelling from a Category 2 area to stay in the same house as a pupil from our school. What do we need to do?

A3. As of 11 March 2020, advice received is that the individual travelling from a Category 2 country/area should self-isolate if symptoms develop, and follow guidance in relation to calling NHS Direct on 111. There is no need for the pupil to be kept home from school.

Q4. What does each school do in formulating contingency plans in the run up to or event of schools being closed?

Q4. Schools should review their own plans to ensure they are up to date.

Q5. Should we continue to arrange and prepare for school trips, locally, nationally and internationally?

Q5. The local authority is advising that all school trips, events, award ceremonies, gatherings and parent evenings should cease with immediate effect.

The local authority can only advise not direct schools to cancel trips. If schools decide to cancel trips, the local authority will not cover any cancellation or reimbursement costs.

Q6. Does the local authority have any supplies of hand sanitiser?

A6. The local authority is expecting supplies to resume in early April following a national shortage.

It is important to note that current advice from Public Health Wales advises that regularly washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds remains the most effective way of reducing risk.

Q7. What happens if a pupil with an underlying medical condition (eg Cystic fibrosis) receives advice that they should stay home because of the risks of coronavirus?

A7. Parents/carers will need to follow any medical advice that they receive from medical practitioners, particularly where their child may have an underlying medical condition and be in a higher risk category. Schools are advised to consider absence in these situations on a case-by-case basis.

Q8. Are breakfast club staff responsible for hygiene of pupils during attendance at the breakfast club?

A8. Schools are responsible for the hygiene of their own establishments. Further advice is available in Welsh Government's:

[Guidance to educational settings about COVID-19 Updated 21 February 2020](#)

Q9. Should schools limit the numbers of visitors to the school to essential visits only?

A9. No large-scale meetings/gatherings should take place and schools are advised to only hold essential meetings.

Q10. Can staff be directed to undertake work in the event of a school closure?

A10. Yes. School staff can be directed to undertake work in the event of a school closure.

Q11. If the school is closed for pupils can staff still work in the school building?

A11. No. If the school is closed for pupils, staff should not work in the school building. That said, it is important that regular maintenance of the school building(s) is undertaken by the school caretaker/site manager.

Q12. In the event of a school closure to pupils, are staff able to bring in their own children to school due to child care arrangements?

A12. No. Please refer to Q11.

Q13. What additional cleaning measures are being implemented by the Corporate Cleaning Service? Is there advice for schools that do not use corporate cleaning?

A13. School cleaning continues as normal and all protocols will be followed. Schools should refer to Public Health Wales advice for further information.

Further information is available from Tina Parker on (01656) 643570 or tina.parker@bridgend.gov.uk.

Q14. Is it possible for the local authority to purchase bulk items such as toilet roll and hand sanitiser for schools?

A14. The local authority is currently working with suppliers with a view to securing additional hand sanitising resources for schools. Corporate procurement colleagues have advised that there is currently no shortage of toilet rolls.

Q15. Should schools stop using swimming pools?

A15. At present (12 March), there is no specific advice regarding the use of swimming pools. The local authority would encourage schools to visit the Public Health Wales website for updates.

Q16. If parents decide to keep their children (without symptoms) off school, how do we record? If parents ask for work, is the school required to provide it?

A16. All pupils should attend school if they are able to do so.

At present (12 March), children who are not displaying symptoms, have not been in contact with anyone from a designated country or have not been in close contact with anyone who has displayed symptoms (or has been in a designated country), should attend school.

Pupils who do not attend school need to be coded as 'unauthorised absent'. However, we are currently working with Welsh Government with a view to amending this process in light of issues relating to coronavirus. We will schools if this advice changes.

To ensure consistent recording of school absence during this period, please take note of the following advice on appropriate attendance coding, which should be read in conjunction with the above guidance:

- Confirmed case of COVID-19: Code I (Illness)
- Contacts of a confirmed case (defined in guidance): Code C (other authorised Circumstances)
- Travel by a pupil from Category 1 in the past 14 days: Code C
- Travel by a pupil from Category 2 only if symptoms develop: Code C
- Where pupils with suspected COVID-19 have self-isolated (code C) and COVID-19 is confirmed and they become unwell, the code will change to Code I
- Where pupils self-isolate out of keeping with Government guidance these cases should be recorded as Code O (unauthorised absence)
- In the event that school closures are enforced: Code Y

Q17. If staff self-isolate, how do we record this in our returns? And, do we need to report this to anyone in the local authority?

A17. An employee who is prevented from attending work due to self-isolation, as directed by NHS 111, shall be entitled to receive normal pay. This will be approved paid absence and will not be treated as a period of sickness absence.

Q18. Are breakfast club staff responsible for hygiene of pupils during their attendance?

A18. No. Individual schools are responsible for pupil hygiene.

Q19. What guidance can the local authority provide with regards to ‘cover’ in terms of contracts, ratios and duties? Can support staff take on the role of supervision as required?

A19. We understand that Welsh Government is currently exploring these issues. The local authority will provide a further update when available.

Q20. Are there thresholds in terms of staff absences which would impact on closing parts or whole school?

A20. It is important that individual schools undertake risk assessments to judge whether it would be appropriate to close sections of a school based on staff shortage. Currently, this decision must be made by the headteacher in conjunction with the school’s chair of governors. The local authority understands that Welsh Government will be providing further information in respect of school closures in due course.

Q21. What is meant by the schools needing to secure their own legal advice? In what circumstances would this be needed?

A21. The local authority is unable to provide schools with legal advice. Schools should determine whether or not any decision they make could be open to future legal challenge and schools must be satisfied that they making decisions based on advice.

Q22. Could the local authority provide schools with further information in relation to contingency planning?

A22. Officers are currently developing advice in respect of contingency planning for schools and will share further information shortly.

Q23. Could the local authority provide schools with a list of emergency contacts?

A23. Yes. Please find the most up-to-date emergency contact list attached.

Q24. Are parents of children with complex medical needs able to keep their children home from school?

A24. Yes. The local authority would support any decision made by parents to keep children with complex medical conditions at home.